



Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests



Evaluation Criteria and Comment Form for Rivers That May Be Eligible for Inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System

The Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests in the process of revising the forest plan. A required part of the revision process identifying rivers that may be eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. A description of this process can be found in the 2012 Forest Service Planning Rule and Chapter 80 of the Forest Service Land Management Planning Handbook 1909.12.

To complete this evaluation, the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forest Plan revision team developed the following questions to gather information about forest rivers and river segments. Responses to these questions from planning team members, other national forest staff, and interested members of the public will be used to identify which rivers may be eligible.

To provide input, please use one form per river and note the river name in the space provided.

If additional space is needed, provide your comments on separate sheets of paper and reference area name, evaluation criterion, and question number being addressed. Completed forms may be submitted by email to NCplanrevision@fs.fed.us with the subject line: "Wild and Scenic River evaluation input", or by mail at the following address:

Attn: Plan Revision Team Leader,
National Forests in North Carolina
160 Zillicoa St., Suite A
Asheville, NC 28801

October 2015 Note: This hypothetical sample was prepared to help demonstrate how evaluation criteria can be applied to a river or river segment.

River Name: *ILLUSTRATION RIVER*

Additional Instructions: It is critical to describe in detail the outstandingly remarkable values and to explain how they are unique, rare or exemplary features significant at a comparative regional or national scale. For each of the potential ORVs, include a description of the region of comparison that was used.

River Segment: Two segments: upper and lower – from FS property to North Carolina/Alaska state line.

From/To: Two segments: upper from FS property line (headwaters) along Route 1001 to Lake Hermosa; lower segment from Lake Hermosa to North Carolina/Alaska state line.

Evaluated By: (optional)

Date: 10-22-2015

Evaluation Step

I. ELIGIBILITY ANALYSIS

Evaluation StepA. Free – Flowing

- Is the river free-flowing?

(According to Segment 16(b) of the Wild and Scenic River Act, free-flowing defined as, “Existing or flowing in a natural condition without impoundment, diversion, straightening, rip rapping, or other modification of the waterway. The existence of low dams, diversion works or other minor structures does not automatically disqualify the segment for designation. A river segment below or between impoundments may also be considered.”)

Consider:

- Does the river exist or flow in a natural condition?
- Where there are improvements or modifications (such as culverts, fords, fish traps, weirs, fish barriers, j-hooks, rock vanes, or other instream structures), do these structures affect the free-flowing nature of the water?
- If there is a segment of the river that is not free-flowing, should other segments be considered?

Discussion:

Upper segment: The upper segment of the river runs along S.R. 1001 on FS is approximately 2 miles, running from just above the confluence of Little Battle Creek down to just above the confluence of Sleepy Hollow Branch and into Hermosa Lake. The Upper segment of river flows through National Forest Land in a natural condition without impoundment, diversion, straightening, riprapping, or other modification of the waterway.

Lower segment: The lower segment of the river on FS is approximately 3.4 miles from Hermosa Lake to the Alaska state line. The lower segment of the river flows in a natural condition through the Forest. This segment has one major road crossing (Bridge) on S.R. 1001. There is a bridge which has pillars but no culvert. This feature does not affect the river flow.

Evaluation StepB. Scenery

- Do the landscape elements of landform, vegetation, water, color, and related factors result in notable or exemplary visual features or attractions? (When analyzing scenic values, additional factors—such as seasonal variations in vegetation, scale of cultural modifications, and the length of time negative intrusions are viewed—may be considered. Scenery and visual attractions may be highly diverse over the majority of the river or river segment. Outstandingly remarkable scenic features may occupy only a small portion of a river corridor.)

Discussion:

Upper and lower segments:

Scenery of the river is not outstanding in the context of Orange Mountain NF and surrounding areas. The upper segment is characterized with the same elements and features as many other rivers/streams on the Orange Mountain NF. The visual scenery is also affected by the road edge and guard rail running along the streams edge. There are no major geographic features in the river corridor.

Evaluation Step**C. Recreation**

- Are recreational opportunities high quality that attract or have the potential to attract visitors from throughout or beyond the region? (River-related opportunities could include, but are not limited to, sightseeing, interpretation, wildlife observation, camping, photography, hiking, fishing, hunting, and boating. The river may provide settings for national or regional use or competitive events.)

Discussion:

Upper segment: The upper segment contains Wolf Falls. This waterfall, with its close proximity to the road draws numerous visitors to the area. However, the waterfall is very similar to other scenic and accessible falls, such as Rocky Falls, Custer Falls, and Bat Falls.

Lower segment: The lower segment provides a variety of recreation opportunities such as dispersed camping, picnicking, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, paddling, wading, etc. These recreation opportunities attract both local visitors and national travelers that seek this location as their primary destination.

Evaluation Step

D. Geology

- Does the river or river corridor contain one or more example of a geologic feature, process or phenomenon unique or rare within the region of comparison? (The feature(s) may be in an unusually active stage of development, represent a “textbook” example and/or represent a unique or rare combination of geologic features--erosional, volcanic, glacial or other geologic structures.)

Discussion:

Upper and lower segments: *The geology of the upper segment is very common to most of the rivers/streams on the Orange Mountain NF. Thick Prairie Dog Grass covers the banks of both of the segments with gradual fall in elevation. The river is slow moving except through Wolf Falls and it is difficult to see through the vegetation.*

Evaluation StepE. Fish

- Fish values may be judged on the relative merits of Fish populations, habitat or a combination of these conditions.
- *Populations*: Is the river a nationally or regionally important producer of resident and/or anadromous fish species? (Of particular significance are a diversity of fish species or the presence of wild stocks and/or Federal or State listed or candidate threatened, endangered, or species of conservation concern.)
- *Habitat*: Does the river provide uniquely diverse or high quality habitat for fish species indigenous to the region of comparison? (Of particular significance is exemplary habitat for wild stocks and/or Federal or State listed or candidate threatened or endangered species or species of conservation concern. Rare and unique habitats in the corridor should also be considered.)

Discussion:

Upper and lower segments:

There are no known federal or state listed aquatic species or species of conservation concern in the river segments. The populations and habitat are comparable to the surrounding areas and are not rare or unique within the Orange Mountain NF. Higher quality examples of habitat can be found on other rivers on the forest such as Custer River, Little Battle Creek, and Mickens River; all of which are Designated Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Evaluation StepF. Wildlife

- Wildlife values may be judged on the relative merits of either terrestrial or aquatic populations, habitat or a combination of these conditions.
- *Populations*: Does the river or area within the river corridor contain nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous wildlife species? (Of particular significance are species diversity, species considered to be unique, and/or populations of Federal or State listed or candidate threatened or endangered species or species of conservation concern.)
- *Habitat*: Does the river or river corridor provide uniquely diverse or high quality habitat for wildlife of national or regional significance, and/or may provide a unique habitat or a critical link in habitat conditions for Federal or State listed or candidate threatened or endangered species or species of conservation concern? Contiguous habitat conditions are such that the biological needs of the species are met.

Discussion:

Upper and lower segments:

Illustration River supports a wildlife community that is considered typical for riparian zones in the Orange Mountain NF. However, portions of the floodplain and surrounding lands have been surveyed and evaluated for effects to wildlife resources and is prime habitat for Red-eyed Black Squirrels and the Western Jack-rabbit, which are federally listed species (Endangered).

Evaluation StepG. Vegetative /Ecological Values

- Vegetative and ecological values may be judged on the relative merits of either populations or communities, or a combination of these conditions.)
- *Populations:* Does the river or river corridor contain nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous plant species? (Of importance are species considered to be unique or populations of federal or state listed or candidate threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. Diversity and number of species area also important.)
- *Habitat:* Does the river or river corridor contain nationally or regionally important plant communities? (Communities are exceptionally high quality, unusual or critical communities such as old-growth.)

Discussion:

Upper and lower segments:

Wolf Falls Gorge contains a small spray cliff community; however, there are no federal or state listed plant species in the segment and there is no outstanding remarkable habitat for rare plant species. In addition, there are no known sensitive or forest concern plant species documented in the river corridor. The level of human disturbance at Wolf Falls suggest that the vegetation surrounding the river on Forest Service land is not remarkable and is unlikely to support any rare plants. Higher quality examples of can be found on other rivers on the forest such as Custer River, Long Lost Creek, and Frasier River.

Evaluation Step**H. Heritage Resources – Historic and Cultural**

- Does the river, or area within the river corridor, contains important evidence of occupation or use by humans? Or, do sites may have national or region importance for interpreting history?

Historic: Does the river or area within the river corridor area contain features or sites associated with a significant event, an important person, or a cultural activity of the past that is now rare or unique in the region? (A historic site or feature, in most cases, is 50 years old or older).

Pre-Historic: Does the river or area within the river corridor contain sites of prehistoric human use or occupation with unique or rare characteristics or exemplary anthropological values such as evidence of prehistoric human practices and modes of living? Or were areas within the river corridor used for unique traditional ceremonial purposes? Does the area associated with the river represent the origins of cultures or conflict of cultures?

Discussion:

Upper segment: There is one prehistoric site and one historic site known within the segment corridor. Neither of these is of national or regional importance for interpreting history. There are no known features with significant historic importance and the known prehistoric site is not unique. There are no known traditional or ceremonial practices associated with this corridor segment.

Lower segment: The lower segment of Illustration River contains important evidence of long-term and continuous human occupation over thousands of years. The bridge crossing the river on S.R. 1001 is a Nationally Designated Historic site as it was built by the Civilian Conservation Corp. This river section also contains prehistorical sites that are of the highest quality in the Orange Mountain NF. Additionally, several areas within the corridor were used for ceremonial purposes and these uses continue today.

Evaluation Step

I. Other Similar Values

- Are other values of the river or the area within the river corridor outstandingly remarkable, containing nationally or regionally important conditions? (Consider values such as (but not limited to) botany, hydrology, paleontology, scientific resources and heritage values).

Discussion:

Upper and lower segments:

There are no known additional resources to be considered.

Evaluation Step

II. ANALYSIS OF ELIGIBILITY COMPONENTS

If the river segment is free-flowing and one or more outstandingly remarkable values are checked “YES”; then the river area is eligible for designation.

A response to this question when submitting feedback on a specific river is not required. This question will be completed by the USFS after considering input from the public and FS specialists on the answers to questions for free-flowing and ORVs above. This question is displayed now to clarify the future questions that will be answered using input provided on the above.

Conclusion:

III. CLASSIFICATION

If river is eligible, what is the classification? Refer to Table 2 in the 1982 Wild and Scenic River Interagency Guidelines for the criteria used to determine classification.

A response to this question when submitting feedback on a specific river is not required. This question will be completed by the USFS after considering input from the public and FS specialists on the answers to questions for free-flowing and ORVs above. This question is displayed now to clarify the future questions that will be answered using input provided on the above.

- Wild
- Scenic
- Recreational

Rationale: